Shared Spaces, Multiple Voices: Imagining Inclusive and Sustainable Educational Ecosystems with Sean Blenkinsop and Andy Hargreaves

Meaghan Dougherty:
When you think of imagination, what comes to mind? In *Cultivating Imagination: Leading Toward a Just Future* we seek to move beyond imagination as whimsy to engage the power of imagination. In this podcast, we make sense of what we know of educational leadership and imagination and create new potentials of what could be. We engage experts in imagination leadership and social and eco justice and dialogue to determine imagination's integral role in changing the future. We seek practical tools to cultivate imagination for both sense making and sense breaking in education and in our wider communities. Welcome to the conversation.

Stephen Hurley:
So today on the podcast, in addition to being joined by Meaghan Dougherty and Gillian Judson, we have special guests today. Andy Hargraves, who is a visiting professor at the University of Ottawa and also a research professor at Boston College in the United States. And from Simon Fraser University, Dr. Sean Blenkinsop, who is a professor in the faculty of education. Welcome to all of you. So let's begin by talking about the current work that you're doing, your current roles, and I'm going to break the second rule of podcasting right off the bat and actually build in a second question to that. Perhaps you could talk about your leadership priorities within that role. So what you're doing now and how you see your leadership priorities in that work. Sean, let's begin with you.

Sean Blenkinsop:
I think maybe the biggest piece for this conversation, well, maybe there are two pieces for this conversation. Number one is for the last 15 years, I've sort of somehow accidentally, luckily, beautifully found myself in the midst of doing school change work. A lot of this comes about from a sort of sense of kind of environmental problematics, of social justice questions, of sort of thinking about public education from my own background as an outdoor environmental educator. And so I've come in thinking about how we might in some ways, historically change behavior of folks. And at a certain point in time, I got to a place where I was like, I just don't think this is just about changing the behavior of individuals. I think if we want to move towards a more just both socially and ecologically kind of culture, kind of community, it's actually a question of cultural change. And if it's a question of cultural change, then it's, A, an educational quest, and B, it's a question of working in schools and seeing how schools can change and move and flex in some ways all the way down. Like, can we make schools places that are culturally more just more ecologically aware, more socially friendly, those kinds of things? I don't know if that's leadership, so much like, I don't think of myself as doing leadership, educational leadership, in that kind of way. I'm an educational philosopher in the way I sort of think about things. But in particular, I found that a piece of my work in all of those schools that we're working with has

been about being a kind of dissonator. I don't know, a bit of a pain in the butt, right. Kind of asking the next question, what's next? What else are we being? Just, what are the limitations of this, that kind of work? So possibly leadership as dissonator or something like that.

Stephen Hurley:
So what happens when an official school administrator or a district administrator, for example, becomes that type of dissonator?

Sean Blenkinsop:
It's interesting. I don't think I have an answer for that question, although I did spend, like yesterday, I spent sitting with a principal who has a background as an activist and how they're sort of negotiating this space of being school district representative, middle manager, and their own sort of sense of justice in response to what's going on. Her response was about thinking about it differently. She talked about being less sort of standing in the street with the sign and more being at the table and kind of pushing questions at that sort of level. So it was interesting to think about for her leadership, this leadership as being a place where she could actually dissonate, but dissonate in a different kind of way.

Stephen Hurley:
You have me thinking that dissonator is probably not part of many job descriptions for modern day school leaders, but perhaps it could be.

Sean Blenkinsop:
No, but it's an interesting kind of educational question. Right. All the way back to kind of philosophical conversations about education, all the way back to Dewey. You have this sort of sense that sometimes in an educator, what works is to plant a burr, to kind of cause the learner to have to kind of scratch at something for a while and really kind of work with it rather than sort of making it totally comfortable all the time.

Stephen Hurley:
Andy, I know you're probably wanting to respond to some of that, but let's begin by having you talk about your current role or roles. And I know you've thought a lot about leadership. What are the leadership priorities that are on your mind these days?

Andy Hargreaves:
Yeah. Thanks, Steven. So let's talk for a moment about the leadership I'm doing, as well as the leadership that I've been studying. So until a few years ago, I was president of an international organization, elected president of the International Congress for School Effectiveness and Improvement. It has an annual conference in a different country, about 700 to 1000 people from 41 countries each year. It's been going for about 40 years. And my platform, when I became president elect, I called over a summer about 10% of the membership. And what I discovered from those phone calls was, first of all, some people hadn't renewed their membership so I could get them to do that. Second is they really appreciated, out of the blue, a leader of the organization, calling them wherever they were in the world. But thirdly, most importantly, they

loved the organization, but also felt it was old and white. And so from what I learned from calling people, my platform, which is not the one I began with, was really how to bring about generational renewal, inclusion and diversity within the organization. So we could later talk about what that looked like in practice, but it involved bringing to bear much of what I knew intellectually, I guess, and through the research into the work of leadership. In between, I've been an advisor to two governments, the premier of Ontario, 2014 to 2018, very much around an agenda of achieving equity through inclusion, that it's hard to succeed in school unless you can see yourself there in some way within the curriculum, the pedagogy, the way the school is organized. I'm currently an advisor for the government of Scotland, for the first minister of Scotland, who is like the prime minister. So we're helping them to think a lot about leadership, particularly what I call "leadership from the middle," the title of my book last year, which is leadership that is both closer to the practice and closer to each other than individual heroic leadership at the top. I'm about to advise another province in Canada, but I can't say who that is yet until that becomes public information. And over the past two and a half years, I've been a principal investigator, had lots of other people on the team of, like, seven faculty. I've had a co-investigator, Trista Holwick, and of a $2.7 million project funded by the Lego foundation to build a network of 41 schools across Canada in seven provinces, wherever possible, linked to policy pursuing play-based learning for middle year students who were particularly vulnerable because of the impact of Covid-19 on so many kinds of minoritized students, by race, by indigeneity, by disability, by second language, by gender identity, and so on. So we've been thinking a lot. As a group, I'm working with people. I'd say in the last ten years, pretty much all my research has been collaborative research and development with people, not about people or for people. And this has made us think a lot about issues of on the one hand, identity and inclusion, engagement and well being. So with my colleagues, I have three books on that over the last three or four years, the latest of which is called *The Age of Identity*. And also thinking about leadership, what it means to lead schools and districts and whole countries through that agenda. And the one issue we highlight most, which is what we think is unique, is not just about how to include different identities and what leadership work needs to be done to make that possible, a big part of which is imagination, by the way, knowing what it's like to be somebody else that you're not. But the key thing is we think it's time to rethink intersectionality, which means people are more than one thing. They are multiple things. Not all those multiple things are negative always. Sometimes they're positive, and often they're contradictory. So leadership now in a lot of places is about dealing with what in Canada, we call competing human rights, which means working with people who are privileged in some ways but oppressed in others. So, for example, a white working class that may also be xenophobic and racist in places, working with branches of all three abrahamic religions, certain branches that want the freedom of worship, but may also be patriarchal and homophobic, reconciling national identity with immigrant and long standing Indigenous identity. How do leaders reconcile what are now called parents' rights to know what their kids are doing and who they are with teachers' judgments about what those children need as citizens now and for the future?

Stephen Hurley:
So you're taking on a lot there. I don't want to suggest that you're looking to change the world, but there are some heady issues that you're tackling there.

Andy Hargreaves:
Well, Stephen, I'm 73 years old next week, so I'm running out of time. If I sound a bit impatient, that may be part of the reason.

Stephen Hurley:
Right. I know in your work, Andy, you've talked extensively about creativity and innovation. I wanted to take a couple steps back to that idea of imagination. And certainly listeners' ears will have perked up when you mentioned Lego. Because when people think about play-based imagination, Lego often comes to mind, or it did at one time. How do you frame imagination? How do you define it? How do you explain what imagination is to other people?

Andy Hargreaves:
Well, imagination is simply the ability and willingness and capacity to construct in one's head what it is like to be in another place, in another time, in another head, in another body, in another culture, in another world, and in another activity that's not always good or particularly practical. So Gillian's written about the walking curriculum. I am a hiker obsessively of the Appalachian trail. And I read maps in bed at night. My wife once turned around to me and said, don't you think some people might regard this as a little bit eccentric? But in reading those maps, it enables me to imprint in my head an image of what a hike is going to be like. And it enables me to engage in the reverie, the joy of being in a calm place at night, places I've been before I go to sleep. Is that immediately practical in any way? It's not, but there are other aspects that are hugely practical. So, for example, what is it like for a person of one identity to understand someone with a different identity and what they're going through? And I powerfully am opposed to a norm that exists in some areas of social justice scholarship, that we have to be replicants of someone else in order to understand them. Women can only understand women. Children can only understand children. People of one race can only understand people of the same race. And an imagination, learning, and all kinds of supports for that are tools, I think, in many ways as well as ways of being, to enable us to try and know what it's like to be an enslaved person or a convict or a dictator, or somebody living in another culture or time. This is why people who look like me read books like *The Poisonwood Bible* or *White Swans* or *The Color Purple*. Because we want the fascination of truly trying to know what it's like to live another kind of life.

Stephen Hurley:
You've given us a lot to think about. I'm reminded of an accusation that came my way, suggesting that I have no need to be at any party that I've been invited to, because I often imagine what it's going to be like so far in advance that I've already had the party in my head, vivid imagination that way. But I still turn up. Sean, I wanted to ask you. You may want to respond to some of Andy's ideas on imagination, but you probably have some unique ones of your own, being a philosophical mind.

Sean Blenkinsop:

Well, I appreciate what Andy had to say. A couple of things. First, Andy, as an outdoor guy, I spent hours with maps. I remember I would actually tape them on the bunk bed above me so that I could watch them as I went to sleep. So maybe we're mutually map eccentric, I'm not sure. And in your list, as you kind of talked about the imagination, I kept going, "or a tree, or a tree, or a tree." And I think there's an interesting way in which the imagination can, as you seem to suggest, sort of allow us kind of an empathetic relationship. And I think part of the work that we do is very much about trying to have people reach across that, I don't know, somewhat chasmic divide between ourselves as human bodies and the natural world at a certain point in time. The other piece that I started to think about was that, well, there were two pieces I started to think about. One, in the work that we've done with the schools and sort of supporting teachers to think into things, supporting students to think into things. We discovered that, in fact, there tends to be a kind of, I don't know, maybe it's a quotidian myth around the imagination that the imagination can do anything and it can go anywhere and it can transfer to any kind of possibility. And intriguingly enough, what we found is that in some ways there are times where imagination seems to be limited by the stuff of one's experience, sort of the physical experiences, the mental experiences, the intellectual experiences. But it also seems to have sort of edges that are culturally framed as well. And so I think when Andy's pushing this idea of sort of transcultural imaginative work, right, that's part of what we're noticing, too. And how do we support teachers, learners, all kinds of folks to kind of push those imaginations out beyond the cultural limits? And often the indicator for that was when somebody would say, I've never even thought of that. It would be a sort of sense of like, oh, interesting. How can I help make a space for you to think?

The other piece that has become very much a part of our work, and I'm just going to put it out there because I actually don't fully know how to kind of think about it, how to kind of explore it. But there's a paper written by Joe Sheridan and Tom Longboat, and it was done in response to an imaginative education conference. And in that paper they posit that the imagination that tends to be thought of in the West– Longboat is Haudenosaunee– that tends to be a kind of imagination that the individual possesses. So the individual imagines things, the individual has ideas, the individual is doing this kind of work. And Sheridan Longboat posit that's potentially an immature kind of imagination and that the mature imagination is actually a kind of, and I'm paraphrasing here, a sort of shared space, right? And they use the language of it's a place where gifts can appear from the ancestors and the animals. And I really like this idea of thinking about the imagination as being this kind of shared space. It adds a kind of humility. It adds a kind of attentiveness to it that I think does interesting work for the kind of stuff that we're doing right now, for sure.

Stephen Hurley:
Sean, I wanted to pick up on that and that phrase "or a tree" and sort of link those two things together in terms of the work that you were doing and what you see as the challenges that you're addressing as a scholar, as a thinker. What role does imagination play in that? And how can we, I guess, specifically talk about the use of imagination to solve some of these big problems?

Sean Blenkinsop:

Right. Well, let's say that the Haudenosaunee notion of the imagination is onto something that, in fact, it's not so much how do I turn my imagination to particular things. It's more how do I open the space for this shared imagining to go on? And so I'll just read you a tiny little piece of research that came out. This is with a student named Raven. Raven at this point in time– that's a self selected name– Raven at this point in time is kind of grade three, grade four. And so the researcher asks Raven, so do you hear the plant? And Raven says, yeah, but you have to hear it through your heart. The researcher then says, I was going to ask, where do you hear it? Do you hear it in your heart? And then Raven says, and I think this is an amazing thing to say: little words curl into your mind. You have to know that you're not thinking. And I wonder, I've got another little piece of Raven if we want, sometime later. But isn't that an amazing kind of way that Raven is in conversation with the natural world. Raven is listening to, in dialogue with, and I think the imagination, if we think about it in the Hodnishone way, is a necessary, important part of allowing us to enter into that kind of dialogue.

Stephen Hurley:
Andy, I wanted to go back to you on that same question. The challenges that you're facing and you've outlined that you're tackling many. How do you identify the role that imagination plays in identifying and addressing those challenges?

Andy Hargreaves:
Well, the challenges are many, but they boil down to two interrelated ones. One is how do we achieve equity and social justice through greater inclusion? And how do we effectively include all the adults through good learning methodologies and practices so that by feeling included and not just guilty or sorry or wrong, how can an inclusive approach to the adults create a more inclusive approach for the kids? I mean, that's essentially what it comes to in our book on identity. We have a tool at the back of the book. We have a few tools at the back of the book to kind of help us through this. And one is, it's a triangle where we can think about how to create better inclusion for social justice, politically, emotionally, and cognitively. And of course, the important thing is that all these three things go together, but politically it is about representation. So not only who is at the table, but thinking about who is not at the table. And the truth is, if we have– not a complete, perfect list of identities that are represented at the table, but we have more than one identity, then it enables us to think harder about those voices that are not at the table. And so imagination is involved in that. Emotionally. It is a case of not empathy, because empathy is not enough. Catfishers use empathy to get money out of people. Gold diggers use empathy to get money out of people. Advertising uses empathy all the time to get people to buy stuff they don't need or want. So empathy is part of the answer. But what we need to strive for more is sympathy. And sympathy means we reach deeply into our own past experiences of suffering, of whatever kind that might have been in our own lives, in order to connect with and take responsibility for dealing with the suffering of others, even though it's a different kind of suffering than we specifically have encountered. And that linking back to Sean's comments, that builds on something we already have, but through imagination, then extends beyond it. So we can connect with what it is the other person is experiencing, too. And the third thing is cognitively, which is our belief in the capacity to learn. And so if we believe that all kids can learn, we have to believe that all adults can learn, too. And that through literature or drama or

nonfiction social studies, we can gather knowledge and insight into what it's like to be a different kind of person with a different kind of life. And when we bring these three things together, we can, through leadership, create a more inclusive community amongst the adults so that they can help create a more inclusive community for our young people and other learners.

Stephen Hurley:
Andy, I wondered if you might comment on that idea of, I guess, the difference between imagination being held as a personal attribute, if you will. It's my imagination, and the point that Sean was making about maybe more of a social imagination. I don't want to put words in your mouth or terms, Sean, but sort of that collective.

Andy Hargreaves:
Well, this is the idea, and the name eludes me. Now, Sean will probably remember it better than I can, but the idea of an imagined community. So in some ways, we already have those. A nation is entirely an imagined community. It was not given by any divine power, although some people believe that for some nations. But nations are historical and cultural constructions. They are imagined community. Are they wrong? Is nationalism wrong? First Nations are nations, so they have these things, too. Indigenous games would be games created to identify which territory belonged to whom, so that people didn't kill each other in the quest. So nations are nations, but neither right nor wrong, but they are imagined communities. They are something in the collective conscious. Those imagined communities are ones that sometimes already exist, or they may be ones that exist in the future. Maybe defined by land, maybe defined by networks, maybe defined by interest, maybe defined by all kinds of things, but they are the idea of what a collective might be at its best, what values and ways of life would underpin it, and how we might bring that about so very much. We're shown that imagination, and I think a weakness of the field of creativity is that it often constructs creativity as an individual thing and not as a collective thing or even a collective responsibility.

Stephen Hurley:
Meaghan and Gillian, thank you for entrusting this first part of the conversation to me. I'm going to turn it over to you because I know there are thoughts.

Gillian Judson:
I'm just madly writing notes here, and I really appreciate you being here today, Andy and Sean, and this conversation has been fascinating. As you know, we really want to try to make the notion of imagination more accessible to people. We want to debunk these myths that it's purely fantasy and outside the realm of what leaders need to do. So I've been madly writing, Andy, and in what you've said so far, there's so many of these, what Kieran would call "cognitive tools" at work. In the work you do, for example, just the fact that you were calling people in your membership by humanizing your leadership, this is a really powerful tool of imagination, whether you've called it that or not. I have two questions that I might ask you. First is this notion of maps. And the map is actually another powerful tool of imagination, something that ignites the human imagination. It's sort of a visual story, if you will. It's a mental image of what's to come. It's tied up with emotion, and it's tied up with knowledge. So my question for you is, if we think about the

notion of mapping, I believe as leaders, we need imagination to also understand at a systemic level how things fit together in our organizations, sort of what is the larger story of our organization? How, as a leader, do I fit within this, for example? But importantly, in an age of competing interests, as you've said, in an age in which we seek inclusion and equity, how do leaders then employ, how do they use humanization? How do they use stories? How do they use other tools that actually amplifies more voices, more identities in organizations, if that makes sense. What are your thoughts on how leaders effectively do that?

Andy Hargreaves:
It's a fantastic question, and my head is racing a million miles an hour in terms of thinking the way that I might respond to it, my experience of working with policymakers. So let's go at the highest level. Let's think about, first ministers, let's think about premiers. Let's think about ministers of education, senior bureaucrats, teacher union leaders. All of these. Read 90% of the literature in our field, and it would say what changes people's minds is data. And data sometimes does change people's minds, but when you get into the political realm, mainly what people do is pick and choose their data to support the policies that they've already decided on for other reasons. And they'll list the data they'll talk about, they'll list how many laptops they've bought, how many new schools they've constructed, how many more special education assistants they've employed. Mainly, that is, to back up a direction that they've already chosen to go in and feel kind of nailed to. What actually usually changes people's minds at the very highest level, and I'd argue in any level, is direct encounters with other people and their experiences and stories about those encounters, stories that are well constructed. This is a blessing of our Indigenous heritage and communities. I think stories aren't important just for them. Stories are important for everyone. What's essential for Indigenous communities is good for all of us. Stories create an image. They make something real, they make it feel compelling. As Kieran Egan talked about, they usually have some kind of structure. Often there'll be tension and a resolution. There'll be a kind of message within it as well. And to be honest, and I can't go into detail, but if I want to change the mind of a minister or even a premier, I won't make up a story, but I'll find the right story that will do that and appeal to them through the story to rethink what it is that they've been committed to. So I'm totally with you. I think when we think of tools, we think of data or spreadsheets or protocols, and all of those are important. But stories are among the most ancient of human tools in terms of helping a community figure out where it's been, what it's struggling with, what it values, who it is and what it needs to become, and how that will help everybody.

Gillian Judson:
Thank you. I love that. And the research in effective neuroscience also indicates there's no changed action without affection or being affected. Emotion is the mind's rudder, and story is one of the most powerful tools to affect people. Before we switch to Sean, I have one quick question for you, Andy, and it does have to do with play and the large Lego foundation grant you have. And my question is, it's a serious question because that is all about play based learning. But I'm wondering if we put play in quotes, because play doesn't necessarily mean running around a field playing tag. What space is there in play for leadership? That is, how is and how can leadership be playful? Can it be?

Andy Hargreaves:
So the first thing to say is play does not mean there's happiness and joy in every moment. You watch any group of kids play and sometimes they'll argue, sometimes somebody will walk off. I've seen this. Sometimes somebody will walk away and then they'll say, well, there's no point in that. And then they will come back. There's hard labor. Watch kids construct a fort or a teepee in the woods. And it's hard work. It's sweat and toil. So is climbing to the top of a mountain in bad weather. And a great conversation I had with the head of playful learning at the Lego foundation, somebody called Bolstern Thompson, is that joy is something that comes at the end of playful learning, not necessarily at every moment that we enact it. So I think that is the first thing to grab. And that's important because sometimes I see playful activities in professional learning and development, and sometimes you can see they're leading somewhere. And sometimes teachers are sitting around and thinking, what is the point of throwing a ball in a circle between each other? And there can be a point, but a lot depends on how that is taken up. So some playful activities can be frivolous, distracting, not related to the central purpose of what you're doing. But many playful activities can be deeply connected to what you're trying to do. So often, for example, if people are dealing with something difficult, it's good to put them into another space for a while while they can play with the idea, move it around, see how it works. In a different area of interest might be sport, hobby, families, anything. Get an understanding of what that means there and then bring it back into their workplace. Every meeting, if possible, should have a deliberately playful moment. Every professional learning experience should have deliberately playful moments where people can play around with ideas, sometimes with physical objects, and explore their own thinking and feelings and commitments, and then pursue those in a more kind of deliberate, focused way as well.

Gillian Judson:
Oh, I love it. Absolutely agree. I completely agree about the playfulness needed in any interaction, but also being careful that the play is related to what we're doing. So this will be my segue to ask you a couple of questions, Sean. I feel like dissonating is a form of play. It can be like thinking about intellectual play, thinking about notions of general theories of ideas and anomalies and how that kind of triggers the philosophical imagination. Can you speak more, a little bit about how you actually plant those burrs and get folks scratching at something intellectually in your work? How do you do that? Do you use "what if" thinking? Do you change the context? I'm just curious about how you get dissonating going.

Sean Blenkinsop:
Yeah, I think you set a frame where it becomes a kind of allowable piece of the whole conversation. Right. And some of that has to do with, you create the space itself. Right. Acknowledging that this is what I'm going to do at some of the schools, that is what I say. It's like, look, I'm not very useful at many things, but I can ask some good questions and know that that's kind of what I'm going to do. So that that's a kind of allowed expectation. I think opening up space for a multiplicity of voices does the same kind of thing because people have different ideas, they have different kinds of questions, doing little things that change the accepted ways of doing. For instance, at all of our meetings when we were trying to set up Maple Ridge, we

either had them outdoors, or if we were forced to be indoors, we would have an open space and we would put a plant there, or we would put some more-than-human living being into the circle as a kind of way of sort of naming and of adding that little bit of uncertainty. And I think for us, a large piece of that at Maple Ridge was to not have a building at all. And that just created an entire space of this kind of flexibility of possibility because we didn't already know all the answers, we didn't already know how everything worked. We sort of were coming into this space that was somewhat uncertain. I was just going to say, I think you're right, Gillian. There is a way to think about this as being play, a kind of intellectual play, the sort of game of thinking about ideas. But a game with sort of some fairly robust repercussions.

Gillian Judson:
My mind is spinning off in all kinds of directions. This kind of connects to what you were just speaking of. But I appreciate you brought in the Sheridan and Longboat article about thinking differently about imagination. And I want to pick up on your idea that the idea that imagination might be more of a shared imagining, a shared collective which includes the more-than-human world. So how do educators, leaders open a space for shared imagining in their context? I mean, what tools can we employ to build this connection with the natural world, to include it in our educational conversations? Big question.

Sean Blenkinsop:
It is a big question. Me personally, I don't tend to think about it directly in terms of leadership, but here I'll talk out loud a little bit and see what happens as I think it through. So a couple of things we do very actively in our teaching kind of conversation is we make sure that the natural world is part of everything. So I have a group of teachers right now, and I encourage them to not just sort of plan a lesson or plan their year and then go, oh, and how do we add the natural world to this, but to actually plan in place. So the place that's near the school where they think they'll be taking their students quite a bit, to actually be there in place. So there's a way in which the natural world can contribute just by being present, but hopefully through this kind of shared imagining that ideas that are appearing as teacher is sitting in place actually potentially are kind of shared and are arising, as it were, from a particular kind of place in the way in which I think story arises from particular places, or many stories arise from particular places and contexts. So that's one kind of piece that springs to mind.

A second piece, I think, is, I think one of the challenges for some of the leaders that I've worked with, the principal particularly, and the superintendents that I've worked with, is that they tend to think about it as being, they're doing all the leadership, they're the sort of center of the conversation, whereas in the work that we did just recently around eco-social-cultural change, where we went and we interviewed lots and lots of different communities that see themselves as being, as doing something slightly different than the mainstream. So we interviewed eco villages, we interviewed community based critical activists, we interviewed different Indigenous groups within communities and stuff like that, and we started to see a sort of sense of a kind of leadership fluidity, if that makes any sense.

So that particular situations would arise and we would see particular leadership appear and it wouldn't necessarily be a singular person. It wouldn't necessarily even be a community. It wouldn't necessarily be the same person each time. So there's a sort of flexibility in that kind of community based leadership and in some ways that pushes against a particular notion of sort of a singular leader that's sort of holding all of the pieces and is the expert and has all the answers. And it opened up a space for a much more, I think, as Andy points towards, kind of much more inclusive, diverse space, but a diverse space that holds difference and recognizes differences being of value in the way in which I think a robust ecosystem does these things as well. Like, not everybody is a worm, but we need worms, right? And that kind of thing. Anyway. Did I lose track of your question, Gillian?

Gillian Judson:
No, it's fabulous. It's just fabulous.

Stephen Hurley:
I wanted to move to that area of social and ecological justice. In our final moments together here, I'd like to ask both of you– and Andy, we can begin with you– what you actually think of and what you mean when you talk about social and ecological justice.

Andy Hargreaves:
A long time ago, 2006, actually, I wrote a book with Dean Fink called *Sustainable Leadership*. It was about ten years too early because in addressing sustainable leadership, and as people address sustainable leadership now, they still tend to think mainly of two things. One is leadership about ecological sustainability. So green buildings, recycling, studying the water quality in the local river, doing projects on climate change, focusing on the UN's sustainable development goals. So it tends to be either about sustainability or in a fairly simplistic way, it's about thinking about your organization that might continuously learn or continue. And that's basically it. The work and the framework is something that actually we've started to come back to. So there's a couple of recent articles out you can get on my website. And what it does is what our framework originally takes from the ecological field is what makes a sustainable ecology. And how do you apply those principles to sustainable leadership and sustainable human organizations? And if I can remember them, there are seven. There's like a sentence on each. So one is sustain something that matters not, that is superficial or wrong or harmful. Make sure it has depth. Make it a collective responsibility, not, as Sean warned us against, dependent on a single heroic individual. Make sure that it lasts over time. So think about leadership succession. Think about who will follow you. Don't think that you're immortal. Think about the relationship between the elders and those behind them. Fourth is, what's your impact on other people around you? So don't have an innovative team of teachers which ignores all the other teachers in the school. Don't have a school that you put all your resources into that actually doesn't help the schools around them. Don't have a competitive environment, school against school, where some schools prosper at the expense of other schools. Fourth is diversity. So strong environments are biodiverse. So are strong organizations. They have diversity of students, they have diversity of staff, ethnically, generationally, in terms of thinking styles and teaching styles. Then there's, sixthly, there's the question of energy. So don't burn people out.

Don't get people to sacrifice themselves at any cost, because if they're no use to themselves, they'll be no use to anybody else. But think of renewing people's energy by how the job feels, by renewing them emotionally, renewing them professionally. And last but not least, is, and again, this is an Indigenous idea, which is build a better future, not by ignoring the past, or demeaning the past, or discarding the past, or conversely repeating the past, but actually build a better future by connecting to the best of what we believe our past has been. I think if we apply good theories of sustainable ecologies to theories and practices of organizational leadership, we'll be better amongst ourselves in creating the better world that we're living together.

Stephen Hurley:
So, Andy, is it possible to take our conversation today about imagination and you're thinking about imagination and imaginative leadership and weave that through some of those elements that you've just described?

Andy Hargreaves:
So, short answer will be probably yes. But if you're asking me to do that right now, you're probably stretching your expectations of me.

Stephen Hurley:
Maybe one or two insights on maybe how we can frame this conversation in terms of that idea of imagination.

Andy Hargreaves:
Well, collective imagination, not just individual imagination as a distributed, shared responsibility of how things might be better and more inclusive. Think about who's on your, if you're in a school, think about who's on your team. Don't always when you're innovating, especially in projects like this, and we call for teams, we call for schools who want to get involved. Don't always go with the volunteers, the people who step forward first. Go bring in some of those that Sean would talk about, who are good at dissonating, good at questioning, good at being a little bit skeptical. So diversity should include a little bit of dissent as well, because that will help you eventually learn and grow more inclusively and understand that imagination shouldn't just focus on anything for its own sake, but imagination should be there to help us create a better world together, something that is more sustainable. Those are just like three random things that we might pick up.

Stephen Hurley:
Yeah, thanks for those. Sean, I wanted to turn that question on social and ecological justice back to you. I know you have some thinking and some writing around this. And again, how our conversation about imagination might be threaded through your thinking.

Sean Blenkinsop:
Yeah, I think… My sense is, in following from Andy's discussion, I think one of the ways in which we try to think about it, we try to kind of play with it, is this kind of rich, sustainable, successful ecosystems, and thinking about it in that kind of way. And this goes all the way back to some

sort of deep ecology kinds of conversations around a notion of sort of mutual flourishing. And what does that start to look like? And I think mutual flourishing both involves… There's a kind of way you can think about it definitionally, right. This sort of space where all beings have the ability to self determine, for instance. Right? And they have a freedom in that. But that then brings the responsibility of supporting others' self determination, while simultaneously not getting in the way of that self determination and making sort of really thoughtful decisions about how that happens. And I think this is gifting economies and sort of those kinds of sense of responsibility in that this notion of mutual flourishing, then, has interesting ripple effects down into how we educate, how we lead, how we be human, even. And I think that's a piece going all the way back to the beginning as Andy was defining the piece, the imagination becomes this really important piece in thinking about that, how do I imagine myself being a different human being? What kind of human being might I be? Might we be? And that's imaginative work, at that point in time, right? What might the red cedar that's right behind my house right now, that's got the sun shining on it, what might it consent to or not consent to? How might I engage it with kindness? How is it offering kindness to me? And those words that I'm using, consent and kindness and determination and self-determination and freedom, I think, come from some of the work of Leanne Simpson. But I think they're also part of this idea of sort of beneficial, mutually beneficial flourishing and what that starts to look like and imagining ourselves into a place like that. Because I think– and here I'm a little bit influenced by Sartre for some reason– Sartre has always been a bit of an influence for me, right. But he sort of thinks that the imagination is useful because it allows us to both recognize the situation we're currently in as being problematic. He uses the language of "intolerable," so we could use that language as well. But if we think about the situation we're currently in as problematic, but what we have to be able to do is we have to be able to see ourselves in another place, in another situation, having an option. Because otherwise, what we simply do is we simply adapt the way in which the frog in the slowly heating water would adapt. So, in fact, the imagination plays this pivotal role in change by allowing us to see possibilities for ourselves that are different than what they currently are.

Stephen Hurley:
Well, Andy and Sean, I wanted to thank you for your insights, your experience and expertise, and the work that you're doing. Thank you for this conversation. Gillian and Meaghan, I'm not sure if you wanted to weigh in with some final comments.

Gillian Judson:
I've just got so many things I need to write about and think about, and that is, for me, that is why I listen to podcasts, is to get my mind rolling. And so I know that the listeners of this podcast will love this, and it is completely what we're looking to do in this project. So I thank you both very much. Listeners, you get to enjoy also a little bit more ruminating on these ideas by Andy and Sean in a short little blog they'll be doing on the project as well. So that's it for me. Thank you so much.